

January 14, 2001

Magalie Roman Salas, Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW, Room CY-B402  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: CC Docket No.: 01-347**

**Application by Verizon for Authorization Under Section 271 of the Communications Act to Provide In-Region, Interlata Services in the State of New Jersey**

Dear Ms. Salas:

On behalf of the 1,600 members of the New Jersey State Grange, New Jersey's oldest general agricultural and rural public interest organization, I am pleased to submit the following comments in support of Verizon's application to provide In-Region, Interlata Services in New Jersey. The New Jersey State Grange believes that rural areas of New Jersey deserve access to the same basic public and commercial services that our state's urban and suburban communities enjoy. One of those basic services is telecommunications.

Increased competition in local and long-distance telephone services has always benefited rural America. Yet, most of New Jersey's rural areas are still served by a single telephone service provider. This cannot continue. Rural New Jersey communities, like urban and suburban communities, deserve more choices in the number of telephone providers offering long distance service as well as those offering local service.

Increased competition and lower overall telephone bills are only one of our concerns. Other telecommunications services, such as access to the Internet, are also important to rural New Jersey. The Grange believes that eliminating unnecessary regulations on providers of advanced telecommunications services will increase choice and decrease costs of these services. Nearly all consumers in urban areas today have access to toll-free Internet dial up services as well as high-speed Internet access. However, too many rural consumers are still waiting for reliable, toll-free Internet access in their area. Rural consumers that don't have toll-free Internet access must incur long-distance charges for the time they spend online, in addition to their ISP service charges.

New Jersey leads both the nation and the world in the development and deployment of state-of-the-art telecommunications technologies. Given the promise of these new technologies and the services and economic opportunity they can bring, we cannot leave any of our citizens behind. We believe the application by Verizon will serve the interest of New Jersey's rural citizens and communities and will bring the competition and economic opportunities that all Americans deserve. The New Jersey State Grange looks forward to the FCC's approval of this application.

Jack Robinson

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